

CATECHISM CLASS:

Cure For Insomnia?

by MANNY HERNANDEZ



A catechist friend of mine tells me his catechism class is very unsteady. There are as many kids joining and rejoining as there are quitting. Another says her class is dangerously thinning out. But why this skimpy business? This down-grade plunge? Any reason for it?

Sometime ago, this "friend of mine" asked one of his "ex-catechism" pupils why he hasn't attended classes anymore. "Aw, it is very long", came the prompt reply.

Very long? But the truth is, catechism classes occupy only thirty minutes. And merely once a week. Is that really long? Unless, of course, the kids find the catechist too boring. Either by his monopoly of the situation, or her inability to overcome her own drabness. Or plain unpreparedness for class.

Here's Ramoning, a Legionary catechist. Once, on his day of teach-

ing, he unluckily prolonged his siesta to an undesirable hour. Waking up, he grabs his watch, jumping.

"Ten to four! Ten minutes to dress up and rush to church. Whew! I forgot to prepare my lecture. . . . What'll I tell my class today? Never mind. . . . bahala na. Hey, Junior, did you take my folder away from the top of the piano? My pencil, where is it?"

By the time he is ready, he has exactly three minutes left. He runs to his class in the church. Arriving, he's five minutes late. Breathless. Speechless. Feature: an uninteresting talk. Result: drowse plus relaxed brows.

From that, one gets the impression that a fellow in the acutest stages of insomnia can simply team up with a huddle handled by a sleep-shod Ichabod whose polite title is "a catechist" Presto! He's sound asleep without

the aid of sleeping pills. Imagine that!

At a junior praesidium meeting a few weeks ago, one of the girls tearfully reported that her class was swiftly diminishing. The Presiding Officer asked her why. "The kids are very sleepy."

Her answer contained everything. The praesidium president understood that she lacked the knack of proper class handling. May be, she was sleepy herself. Probably, prolonging her noon-day nap. Or catching a few more forty-winks after that Saturday night dance.

In short, she was a sorry victim of "Catechetical" drowsiness. What's more sorrowful is that there are hundreds of others just like her all over our Islands today. That's something our parish priests ought to worry about. But sorry, our priests are too few for the vineyard.

At a catechetical convention held recently, one of the demonstration teachers did not know her pupils' names. Nor did she strive to. One of the delegates noticing this, asserted that it was not courteous for a teacher to call her pupils by the color of their clothes, the complexion of their skin, or their seating position in class.

Like this: "You in green, stand up!" "You big boy at the back, answer my question." Or just a plain "You!" accompanied by a finger pointed at the child.

This may be true on the first days



TYING THE KNOT

A missionary working among the natives in the "back woods" of the Hawaiian Islands had great difficulty in making the members of his flock understand the meaning of the Christian marriage ceremony. They did not, in fact, feel that they were properly married until he worked out this series of questions:

To the man: "You savvy this woman?"

"Yes."

"You likee?"

"Yes."

"By and by you no kick out?"

"No."

And then to the woman: "You savvy this man?"

"Yes."

"You likee?"

"Yes."

"By and by you no kick out?"

"No."

"Pau." (Done!)

—The Liguorian

of class. But as the calendar folds up, teacher and pupils must know and love one another. It's easy to remember friends' names. It's just as easy to honor Christ's little loved ones.

Careless and thoughtless handling can make a child dislike the class. A child, for all you know, wants love and attention, although she doesn't say it. Children think that the big boys and girls who are kind to them are just as good as their own brothers or sisters.

A priest present at the same convention didn't like the idea of a teacher remembering her pupils' names. When things got clearer it was understood that the goodly priest was referring to big classes where the number ranges in the vicinity of a hundred tots.

This Father said such classes could be found in many provincial towns with utter lack of teachers. It would not be surprising to find the catechists there complete strangers to their pupils. Much less try to learn their names by heart. The priests himself was not in favor of such simple etiquette. This is where sleepiness often comes in.

Once, on a home visitation assignment, we met a child named Celestina. She had stopped attending her catechist classes. Why? She thought she wasn't wanted. The teacher always called her "Christina". That wasn't her real name. She didn't

like it. She was a child. Who's to blame? Celestina? Or the teacher?.

That seems trivial. Certainly trivial to our "maturer folks" and all those who think they are... But to a child, it isn't. In fact, Father Gannon, S.J., in one of his books states that a name forms part of a man's character. And perhaps, children feel it stronger than any grown-ups.

And, going back to the gentle art of dozing and the insomnia surecures, here's another incident. It isn't a class scene. It's a significant aftermath.

Setting: the church patio. Time: shortly before dusk one Sunday afternoon. Characters: two little girls just off from their catechism classes. Subject: the teacher's yawns. Theme: the teacher is very sleepy.

"Do you know why Miss Dely frequently yawned while teaching us this afternoon, Lilia?"

"Of course, not. Well, Gloria, do you?"

"Well, you know, Lilia, she was at the barn dance of the Aurora Youth Circle last night. I know it. This morning, I heard my brother talking about her to one of his friends."

So, that's that! Unless we're careful enough, many of our catechism classes might suddenly turn out to be insomnia clinics. And us, catechists, demonstrators of "How to cure insomnia in one catechism lesson!" And everybody in this big wide wicked world knows that's what we ought not to be.